

The Sanitary Commission is beginning to distribute large quantities of vegetables—sauer kraut, onions, and dried apples. The soldiers in the trenches are out of tobacco, and the time hangs more heavily than ever. I commend the want to the Commission's notice. No rain yet.

Mr. Kent of THE TRIBUNE was crowded off a pontoon bridge by a passing train and a stupid driver, a day or two ago, himself considerably bruised, and his horse killed, notwithstanding the latter fell uppermost.

Wilson's Great Raid—Full History of the Affair—Great Destruction of Railroads—Heavy Fighting—Desperate Efforts of the Rebels to Capture or Destroy our Forces.

Special Dispatch to The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1864.

The special correspondent of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* has just arrived, with the following account of the recent cavalry raid:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, NEAR PETERSBURG, Saturday, July 2-3 p. m.

The force composing the expedition consisted of Gen. Wilson's own division, and that of Gen. Kautz, from Butler's department, the whole under command of the former, and numbered from 5,000 to 6,000 men. There were also with the expedition, three batteries of four guns each, half lighted ordnance and half light twelve-pounders, and one battery of small mounted howitzers.

With this force Gen. Wilson set out at 1 o'clock a. m. on the 29th ult., starting from the vicinity of Prince George Court-House. He crossed the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad at Reims Station, at which point Col. Chapman, with the 2d brigade of Wilson's own division had a skirmish with a small force of the enemy, who, however, were easily driven. Thence the expedition moved by way of Dinwiddie Court-House, toward Petersburg and Lynchburg, on the south side of the railroad, which they struck at Ford's Mills, near Sutherland's Station. They then moved down the road, Gen. Kautz in advance, as far as Ford's Station, destroying the road as they moved.

At Ford's Station they captured two trains, comprising 16 cars with the locomotives. They were laden with refugees leaving Petersburg. After destroying the depot and the captured trains, the command bivouacked at Ford's Station for the night.

Early on the morning the 3d they resumed their march, Gen. Kautz still in advance. Near Nottoway a force of Rebel cavalry, comprising two brigades, appeared on the right flank of our column, while moving some distance along the south side of the railroad. Col. Chapman of the 2d Brigade formed in line, and engaged the enemy. This was about 3 p. m., and the encounter continued till nearly night, when the enemy was forced back.

Gen. Kautz, who had passed on before the enemy appeared, proceeded the same afternoon to Burkeville, junction of the Petersburg with the Richmond and Danville Railroad. Here he destroyed all the depots, railroad switches, and appliances, and tore up the road as far as possible in every direction from the junction, after which he rested there for the night.

Gen. Wilson, with the remainder of his force, had bivouacked at Nottoway Court-House, and on the afternoon of the 24th advanced across the country to Medeburg Station, on the Danville Railroad, to meet Gen. Kautz, who was to join him at that place, destroying as he advanced. After forming a junction at that station, the entire force marched to Greenville, and there bivouacked.

The work of destruction was resumed early on the 25th, and by 3 p. m. we had reached the vicinity of Staunton Bridge on the Staunton River, having completely destroyed every foot of railroad up to that point.

The distance from Burkeville measured on the map is about thirty-five miles, and adding to this portions of the South Side Road which were destroyed, the aggregate would not be less than fifty miles, and probably more than that distance.

The Danville Road was constructed in a fashion known to some extent in the extreme West, but now little used. Instead of using T rail, solid beams of wood, technically called stringers, are placed upon the ties, and along their inner edges are fastened long strips of iron known as strap rails. The stringers were of yellow pine, and, being perfectly dry, it was only necessary here and there to pile on a few rails from an adjoining fence and ignite them to set the entire structure in a blaze.

Miles of railroad might have been seen at a time in flames, and at night the whole canopy of heaven was one glare of light. By day these conflagrations, adding to the already insupportable temperature of the atmosphere, rendered the heat almost intolerable, and many people living in the vicinity of the railroad were obliged to leave their houses and settle in cooler localities.

The rear of our column in moving past the fire kindled by the advance was often compelled to leave the road and move at a respectful distance on the right or left, until, after little experience, the plan was adopted of leaving the depots and other buildings to be fired by those in the rear.

The mode in which this work of destruction was accomplished was to dismount a portion of the command and march them parallel with the railroad, then face about a regiment at a time toward the track, have them advance and ignite the section of the road in their front and then resume their march. It was but the work of a few minutes for each regiment to perform its part, and the whole was accomplished nearly as fast as the column could move.

It is only necessary to remind the public of what is already known, viz.: the fact that this railroad was now the only one on which the enemy could depend for communication with the South, South-east and South-west—the only route by which he could bring up troops or supplies to Richmond or Petersburg; and this being remembered, it is easy to appreciate the importance of the destruction of so large a section of it. Even with the best facilities for repairing, it would require several weeks to place it in running order—weeks of exceedingly precious time to the enemy; and, considering the difficulties which embarrass them, including army wants, want of materials, and constant liability to interruption, it is doubtful whether they will succeed in reconstructing this railroad before the present campaign is decided.

The Weldon Road, although but a small portion of it is torn up, is equally unavailable, and practically the Rebel army under Lee and the Rebel Government are isolated by an interval of many miles from all railroad communication with the interior of the Rebellion.

To return to our narrative of the raid: The force arrived in the vicinity of Staunton Bridge in the afternoon of the 25th. It was of course desirable to destroy this bridge, which was a very important one, and an effort was made to effect this object. Gen. Kautz, who was still in advance, being assigned to make the attempt. It was found that the enemy were fully prepared to defend it. Our approach had been heralded in advance, and militia called hastily together from eight adjoining counties had been concentrated at this point.

Troops from Danville had also been brought up, and it was reported that Extra-Billy Smith had been sent from Richmond to take command. This force was well protected by substantial earth-works, of which there were three lines, and in a sort of redoubt there were three heavy guns.

There was also a battery of smaller guns higher up the river, which opened an enfilading fire upon our troops as they advanced. One of our batteries was brought to bear upon the bridge alone which were

posted the enemy's sharpshooters, whose firing was somewhat troublesome. As soon as the character of the defenses and the number of troops there was ascertained, it was determined to withdraw, as any attempt was pretty sure to be futile. The 1st District of Columbia Cavalry, Col. Baker's regiment, of Gen. Kautz's command, lost most heavily in this affair; but the entire loss in the division was not more than 60 killed and wounded.

From this point our raiders moved in a north-easterly direction towards Weylsburg, which they reached, after a night's march, near daylight on the morning of the 26th, halting there for about an hour.

The 26th, 27th, and earlier part of the 28th were marked by few events of any importance, except that on the 27th the brigade of Fitzhugh Lee appeared on our left flank, which occasioned some little skirmishing, lasting, however, but a very short time, and attended with few, if any, casualties. This brigade was the one first encountered at Reims Station, and again at Nottoway Court-House, and appears to have followed our course as closely as was safe and convenient, doubtless for the purpose of reporting our movements and the direction taken by us.

Our route lay through Christiansville, across Meherris Creek at Sanford's bridge, and thence to the double bridges on the Nottoway River.

A considerable portion of the country passed through was inhabited by farmers owning few slaves, and cultivating their land chiefly by their own labor. Among these people, as among the same class elsewhere, a degree of Union feeling was found to exist, and they were almost unanimous in expressing their complete weariness of the war, and longing for the return of peace on almost any terms. In those sections where there were negroes they flocked to us in large numbers, exhibiting the greatest eagerness to avail themselves of this chance for liberty. "De massa," under pressure of the hard times, is compelled to curtail his allowances of meat, pork, &c., to the narrowest limits—a procedure which Caffee finds exceedingly difficult, properly to reconcile with that of increasing his allotment of work by fifty per cent, and therefore he leaves in the very real, sensible hope of finding more profitable investment for his labor. Besides, freedom hath its charms.

On the 28th we reached Nottoway river at double bridges. The 2d Ohio cavalry of McIntosh's brigade having the advance, drove the Rebel pickets before them some miles before reaching the bridge. There was, however, no force there large enough to give us any trouble, and we crossed without difficulty early in the afternoon.

Thence we moved on toward Stony Creek, intending to cross the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad at Stony Creek station. It had been designed to cross some miles further south at Jarrett's Station, but it was ascertained that the road at that point was guarded by a heavy force made up partly of militia and partly of troops sent up from Weldon. The design of crossing there was consequently abandoned.

The crossing over Stony Creek is somewhat more than two miles from the station. The Rebel pickets were met at the bridge, and no sooner had our vanguard, comprising a squadron or two of the 3d Indiana and all of the 2d Ohio, got over, than the enemy began to show a spirited resistance. They were, however, driven back along the direct road to the station far enough to enable our entire force to get across. Less than a mile from the crossing the enemy were found in heavy force, and Col. McIntosh's brigade, which was in advance, having formed in line of battle, soon became fiercely engaged. Under the fire of the enemy our men continued to form a slight breastwork of rails, logs, stones, and whatever came to hand, and lying down behind it held their ground with great determination against several desperate charges of the enemy.

It was about an hour before sunset when the fight commenced. About 11 p. m. the impossibility of forcing a passage at this point having been clearly demonstrated, Gen. Wilson dispatched Gen. Kautz up a left-hand road, toward Reims Station. Gen. Kautz's division was followed by the wagon and ambulance trains of the whole force, and Gen. Wilson, having constructed a line of rifle-pits in rear of the front line of battle during the night, left in the last Vermont and 6th and 2d New-York, withdrawing the rest of his force a short time before daylight, and following Gen. Kautz to Reims Station.

The men left with the led horses of the regiment, who remained to cover the rear, came in afterward and reported that the enemy, turning the right flank of the men in the breastworks, had captured the whole party.

Gen. Kautz on reaching Reims Station soon found that the enemy were strongly posted at that point also, and was sharply engaged before daylight. Gen. Wilson, with the troops he had brought up from Stony Creek, passed along Kautz's rear, and was about to take position on his left, but had hardly formed in line of battle when he was attacked by a heavy force of infantry, a column of cavalry in the meantime (according to some accounts) passing round to the rear.

The accounts of this affair are rather confused, but it appears that Gen. Wilson, perceiving that his command was in danger of being surrounded, determined to try to save a part of it by moving out by the right flank in a direction nearly due south; Gen. Kautz in the meantime retaining his position, as also the 2d Ohio and parts of the 5th New-York, 2d New-York, and several other regiments belonging to McIntosh's and Chapman's brigades. The reports in regard to the facts of Gen. Wilson and the party accompanying him are vague and conflicting, and the simplest solution of the matter is for the present to admit our ignorance, for in fact the rumors so far received are scarcely worth repeating.

Gen. Kautz seeing that every moment was increasing the dangers already environing his force, gave orders that each regiment should endeavor to cut its way out as best it could, by moving a few miles further down the railroad and crossing it, when the thick woods on the east side would conceal their movements. Dashing at full speed through woods and swamps, over ditches and fences, and in some cases cutting their way with the saber through Rebel troops, the greater part of Gen. Kautz's own division, consisting of the 5th and 11th Pennsylvania, 1st District of Columbia, and 3d New-York, with the members already stated of the 2d Ohio and 5th New-York, and a few of other regiments, made their way with great difficulty into our lines, the enemy pursuing and firing upon them till they got within our picket-line on the Jerusalem Plankroad. Many were doubtless killed and wounded in running the terrible gauntlet, and many a horse and rider must have fallen in the break-neck chase through the woods.

Col. Spear, commanding the 11th Pennsylvania, and the 3d New-York was the first to cross the railroad; and notwithstanding the hurry and excitement of the moment, some officers found time to cut the telegraph wires.

Our trains, including the ambulances and wounded, must have been captured. The caissons of some of our batteries had been blown up before entering the fight at Reims Station, but the guns and limbers must have fallen into the enemy's hands, not, however, before they were spiked, and as far as possible disabled.

The conduct of the artillery of Lieut. Fitzhugh's battery near Reims Station, receives the highest commendations from those I have heard speak on the subject. It is said they stood firing grape and canister into the ranks of the enemy till the latter were so close upon them that by the time they had spiked their guns and mounted their horses, which the drivers had already unharnessed and held in readiness, the Rebels were within ten paces of the muzzles of their guns.

In addition to the men who came with Gen. Kautz

others reach our lines occasionally, alone or in small squads, and the numbers missing will probably be yet considerably diminished.

It is said by some other men coming in that the Rebels shot and bayoneted many after they had surrendered. One reports that while lying in a swamp he heard another near him cry out, "I surrender." "Surrender, you d—d Yankee," was the reply, "take that," accompanying the exclamation with a volley.

I hear that *The Richmond Enquirer* of the 27th urged that no quarter should be given to any of the raiders—alleging that the death of every one of them would not be an equivalent to the Rebel Government for the damage done to it. This, if true, is the most conclusive testimony that could be asked as to the complete effectiveness of the raid. A prisoner captured near Reims Station states that Gen. Lee had sworn that not a single raider should get back. He has evidently made a stupid endeavor to make his oath good, for not a single crossing on the Weldon Road was left unguarded. The enemy had scouts on miles to the westward on every road by which our troops could possibly approach, and carried information of the direction taken in time to enable them to meet us with a superior force at any point.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly what Rebel troops were encountered at Stony Creek and Reims, but it is certain that there was infantry at both points, besides, probably, the greater portion of their cavalry. It is reported that Fitzhugh Lee was killed in one of the engagements.

The first information brought to General Meade's headquarters of Wilson's position was by Capt. Whitaker of the 1st Connecticut and A. D. C. to General Wilson. He left Reims Station at 8 a. m. of the 27th, with forty men of the 3d New-York Cavalry, and cutting his way through the Rebel pickets and also through a portion of a cavalry column on the move, he reached headquarters at exactly 10-20 a. m. The 6th Corps was immediately ordered out to the assistance of the cavalry, but by the time they arrived, which was near evening, the affair was over. They took position and remained there until the afternoon of the 30th, employing themselves meanwhile in destroying the railroad, which was done most thoroughly for three or four miles.

It would be useless to offer any comment on the circumstances and results of this raid. Suffice it to say that, at the very worst, we may reckon on having a net gain in our favor. One of the fundamental maxims of war is to operate on your enemy's communications without endangering your own. Tried by this maxim, the soundness of Gen. Grant's strategy in selecting Petersburg as the objective point of his great movement from the Rapidan becomes strikingly apparent, and is forcibly illustrated by the results of this raid.

Wilson's Men Coming In—The Sixth Corps Returns to Its Old Position—Losses in Kautz's Division—Gen. Grant's Opinion of the Raid—Shelling Petersburg—Something Important on Foot.

Special Dispatch to The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1864.

C. A. P. writes under date of Friday night, 9 o'clock, that some portion of Wilson's command was coming in, and the 6th Corps returning to its old position.

Wilson, finding it impossible to break through the masses of the enemy, made a detour toward Suffolk.

The losses in Wilson's and Kautz's divisions must be nearly a thousand, mostly by capture. They also lost ten or twelve guns and thirteen hundred wagons, which had joined their march through the country. Considerable as the loss is, Gen. Grant says it is more than compensated for by the results, and declares this cavalry raid to be a brilliant achievement.

Gen. Smith's quarter-hoofly shells thrown into Petersburg kindled a great fire on Thursday evening. The General has left the army on a short leave for his health. Gen. Martindale is in temporary command of the Eighteenth Corps.

Convalescent officers scarcely cured of their wounds are returning to the army rapidly, and are welcomed with respectful joy.

The Sanitary Commission is distributing tobacco, vegetables and other luxuries right in the trenches.

The Union movement in New-York is hailed with delight, but the repeal of the Commutation was received with more satisfaction than ever was any news sent to the army.

H. E. W. writes under date of June 30, to-day has been one of great activity in the new disposition of troops, and the indications are that something big is up.

Good News—Wilson has Arrived—He Makes a Forced March Around the Rebels and Comes In Safely.

Special Dispatch to The N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1864.

The correspondent *The Philadelphia Enquirer* sends the following additional news:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, Saturday, July 3-10 a. m.

Gen. Wilson has come into our lines with the 3d Cavalry Division. There is considerable rejoicing over his return. The old 3d Division still lives, and will yet trouble the Rebel General who, in his violent rage, swore that not one of them should escape. The guns and wagons we can well afford to lose, in consideration of the irreparable damage done to their roads.

The Cavalry of the 3d, with whom I have just conversed, present a sorry picture, weary, dusty and almost worn out men, by twelve days' incessant marching, fighting and vigils, during which time they have marched 350 miles or perhaps 400 miles.

Finding it impossible to cut through Rebel lines at Reims Station, and no help coming from the vicinity of Petersburg, Gen. Wilson ordered his command to retreat under the cover of night toward Suffolk. Having crossed Nottoway River about thirty miles below Petersburg, they struck for the railroad, crossed at Jarrett's Station, and bearing southward crossed the Blackwater at County Road Bridge, and came into our lines at Cash Point, five miles south-east of Fort Vothatan.

But the boat is going, and I have no more time for details.

ASSOCIATED PRESS AND OTHER ACCOUNTS.

Return of Kautz's Cavalry—Proposed Assault on the Rebel Works at Petersburg—The Enemy on the Alert—The Assault Abandoned—Fire in Petersburg.

NEAR PETERSBURG, Saturday, July 1, a. m.

Gen. Kautz has returned with his cavalry. The Rebels gathered every mounted man in their command, and taking advantage of the absence of Sheridan's command, threw their whole force upon Wilson and Kautz; but with surprising gallantry the latter succeeded in cutting his way through. His loss is severe in artillery and men. Wilson has not yet returned.

The damage inflicted on the Danville road is thorough. One bridge over 300 feet long was burned. The Rebels will be obliged to haul their supplies from Hicksford, a distance of 35 miles from Petersburg.

About 6 o'clock yesterday morning the 18th Corps was expected to charge the enemy's works in their front. Martindale and Turner had advanced their fortified line in the night to the place previously occupied by the skirmishers.

At the time the contemplated assault was to be made, Barton's brigade, on the left of the 18th Corps, lying

along the Prince George country road, began to move from their breastworks to the rifle-pits.

The enemy seemed to understand that the intention was to advance our line by the occupation of his intrenchments. A storm of shot and shell from rifled guns and mortars was poured into our troops before they had formed. Two or three volleys of musketry were exchanged. Soon the firing over the breastworks became heavy and regular, but few men were injured.

The Rebels showed themselves too strong at this point to warrant an assault. The 2d and 9th Corps had each made two attempts to take these very works when the army first arrived here. Mortars were freely used on both sides, and the Rebels, with unusual success, dropped their shells directly in our midst. Lieut. Ludlow of Barton's brigade, worked his mortars admirably, and annoyed the enemy very much by the correctness of his aim.

The battery of 32-pounders at Gen. Smith's headquarters fired at regular intervals into the Rebel works and town.

Capt. Butler and Lieut. Fleming, Aids to Gen. Butler, were wounded, the former in the knee, and the latter slightly in the breast.

All through the night the cannonading was heavy, especially